The Builder.

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IT is said with justice, that London is not England. Intelligence, wealth, and power, dwelling in fine cities, and carrying out noble institutions, are to be found in every quarter of our island, and make up an extraordinary aggregate. But in a very short time it seems certain, that all England will be a London, if we may so express ourselves; meaning, that all the advantages possessed at one time exclusively by the latter will become universal, and that the higher degree of cultivation attained formerly by the inhabitants of the metropolis, as compared with those of the provinces, will be found in the remoter parts of the country.

To a great extent, indeed, this is already the case. Railways have brought all the large towns into close proximity to the centre. Every improvement or discovery made in one is immediately known in the other; and a powerful mind residing in Manchester, or Birmingham, or Oxford, or York, or the Land's End, may be felt throughout the kingdom as fully and as speedily as if in London. By ten o'clock in the morning, great part of England is in possession of the same wonderful record and review of the events of the previous day, that is in the hands of the Londoners; and when railway management is improved, *and improved it must be*, and the expense of travelling lessened, as it might be, to one-half, personal communication will be general and constant, and all England, as we said, *will* be a London.

One result of this more general intercommunication is that the adornment of England has become a question of interest to a larger public. An individual confined to his own narrow street, and narrower views, will care less for the proper embankment of the Thames, the widening of thoroughfares, or the unsightly effect of a public building, than one whose avocations lead him into their neighbourhood, and make him personally interested in improvement. And on the same ground it is, that a much greater number of persons now feel interested in accounts of works executed in provincial towns, the progress of art in various parts of the kingdom, and schemes for the general adornment of England,—meaning always when we say England to include the sister kingdoms, Ireland and Scotland, as integral and most important parts,—than was formerly the case.

In our own pages we seek to give this information as completely as is practicable; and the result serves to place the industrial powers of the country in an extraordinary light. THE BUILDER has readers in the farthest corners of the kingdom; and we may perhaps be excused for mentioning, as a proof of its recognition as an organ, as well of the provinces as of the metropolis, that we have recently received invitations from several large towns to investigate their sanatory condition, examine the mode of construction adopted in their buildings, and advise as to general improvements. Enough, however, of this; to which we have been led by accident: suffice it to we will at all times exert ourselves for the adornment of England, the advance of art, and the improvement of our homes.

Last week we spoke about some of the new buildings in London; we will to-day chat about a city which although nearly 120 miles distant, is now reached from London in two hours and three-quarters:—we mean BRISTOL, which ought, if it were true to itself, to hold a higher place and exercise a greater influence than it does. Improvements here have been long talked about and urged; an able local press have pointed out again and again, that it is necessary to make an effort to regain for Bristol the importance it has lost, and fit it to take the lead; but still nothing is done. It is to be hoped, that some vigorous mind, which seems to be wanting, will apply itself to the task, and that the Bristolians will see the necessity of sowing, in order that they may reap, and not be niggardly in expenditure.

The reproach of "penny wise and pound foolish," applies to too many of the doings in Bristol. There is an exemplification of it in the new *Guildhall*, where, in order to obtain a number of offices, and so increase the revenue (very proper if not inconsistent with the main purpose of a building), they have most injudiciously cabin'd and confined themselves, and exposed their architect, Mr. Pope, to abuse from all quarters, local and foreign.

As a Bristol paper says—

"They pulled down the old Guildhall, the hall was so small,
And then they built a new Guildhall, with no hall at all!"

The building, as many of our readers know by this time, is of the late Tudor style, and the front (of Bath stone, from the Coombe Down quarries), is elaborately ornamented with carved strings, scrolls, shields of arms, held up by hands projecting from the face of the wall, statues in niches, and carved parapets, the whole, though not particularly pure, displaying considerable fancy. The chief entrance is in the centre, where a good doorway, under a projecting portion of the front (which is carried up to a greater height than the rest of the building, and forms a central tower), opens into a narrow but lofty hall, the whole length and height of the building, with a staircase at the further end of it. This hall has an open timber roof, and is artistical in effect, though somewhat marred by the want of light: a fault which, unluckily, is not confined to this part of the building in consequence of the confined nature of the site.

The Court itself, into which we will now look, has not sufficient light, although nearly the whole of one side of it is filled with glass. This is a handsome room, but is not half large enough for its purpose in such a city as Bristol. The want of accommodation for counsel, solicitors, and witnesses, has produced some vehement abuse, and should at once be remedied as far as possible, by a fresh arrangement. The space set apart for the public must be lessened, and the entrance to the court altered, in order to give more room to those who are actually engaged there. We cannot understand how the accommodation required could have been so miscalculated as it has been, and are disposed to think the architect can scarcely have had his own way in the arrangement.*

All the fittings of the room are of wainscot; and it has an open king-post roof, elaborately carved. The panelling, into which the ceiling is formed, are perforated for ventilation.

The windows do not open, arrangements being made to admit air through gratings near the floor in various parts of the room. When the Court was in occupation, these were found to be quite inadequate, and, according to report, loud were the outcries for more air. If the only channels for air communicating with the atmosphere, are those we saw in a close yard adjoining, we can easily understand the greatness of the deficiency. If the person to whom the ventilation was entrusted, will take the trouble to calculate how much air per minute would be required to ensure comfort for the number of persons the court will hold, (and this can be done without difficulty), and then estimate with judgment, from the sectional area of the channels provided, bearing in mind also their position, what quantity of air could *possibly* get into the court to meet this demand, he will at once see the mistake he has committed. In still, warm weather, we venture to say the air in the court would be nearly stagnant.

One word to those who have wholly condemned the new Guildhall, because of the objections to which we have been compelled to allude. There is much about the building deserving of great commendation, and we should not be blinded by some few obvious failings to all besides, or forget how much time, thought, and labour are required from the architect, in the erection of a structure of this size and character.† Moreover, as the immortal William of Stratford says:—

"If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels would be churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. I can easier teach twenty men what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching."

A very interesting restoration has been commenced not a long way from the Guildhall, namely, St. James's Church, a specimen of Norman work which has been long cased up by galleries, modern ceiling and whitewash, and was gradually falling to ruin. It consists of a nave and aisles, divided by solid Norman columns and semi-circular arches, of the twelfth century. The clerestory which these carry, has very thick walls and small semi-circular headed windows. An open timber roof has been exposed by the removal of a modern ceiling, and will be restored.

The east end has been fitted up anew with a semi-circular arcade, interlaced arches above, and three semi-circular headed windows conjoined in the upper part, from the designs of Mr. Fripp, under whose directions the restorations are going on. We may perhaps speak of these when finished. A piscina was removed from the east wall (south side) to make room for the new work: but what the date of it was we could not learn. There are the remains of a second piscina, under a cusped arch.

* The courts in many of our towns require amendment, causing, in their present state, great loss of time, comfort, and health. The *Times*, a few days ago, had the following memorandum on the subject:—"At Reading the courts are formed, to use a medical expression, *pro re nata*, out of a long room divided in the middle by two sets of boards, so as to leave a passage between them, and the entrance to this splendid tribunal is up a narrow staircase from the street. At Abingdon the crown and civil courts are a quarter of a mile apart, so that all whose duties call on them to attend both in the course of the day have to take a walk in their forensic costume through the streets. Possibly, however, in this arrangement the county have had an eye to make a sanatory regulation for the bar, by obliging them to take exercise in the open and pure air, to compensate for the evil effects the impurities of the atmosphere in the courts themselves might produce. We have already noticed Dorset: and what we said of the courts there will apply to Winchester and Stafford. At Hertford the Crown Court is, as arrangement displaying the greatest ingenuity made incomparable uncomfortable. Ample accommodation is given to the idle spectators, while about seven or eight only can sit down; and, again, such is the act with which the jury-box has been placed, that almost every person passing to the bar seats from the passage between the two courts, must intercept the view the jury have of the judge, and interrupt the proceedings. The arrangements of the Monmouth courts are admirable, their only fault being that they are hardly large enough to accommodate the number of barristers who now attend them."

† Wilcox and Son executed the mason's and bricklayer's work, and Josephus the carpenter and joiner's work. The ironwork was cast by Rosser and Grazebrook.

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